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To aicher.rebecca, Barbara Butler, Bill Dunbar, Cara Steiner-Riley, Christopher Hunter, Dave Athons, David Allnutt, Glenn Suter, Hanady Kader, Heather Dean, Heidi Nalven, Jason Todd, Jeff Frithsen, Jenny Thomas, Jim Wigington, Joe Ebersole, Judy Smith, Julia McCarthy, Kate Schofield, Marianne Holsman, Mary Thiesing, Michael Szerlog, Palmer Hough, Phil North, Rachel Fertik, Richard Parkin, Sheila Eckman, Tami Fordham

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Subject BlogPost: The Pebble Mine Parade of Cowards - August 18, 2012 by Jack Caldwell

In case you missed Jack Caldwell's recent blog post regarding the recent EPA peer review panel meeting:

<http://ithinkmining.com/2012/08/18/the-pebble-mine-parade-of-cowards/>

The Pebble Mine Parade of Cowards

August 18, 2012 by Jack Caldwell

As I predicted and feared, the peer review panel opining on the EPA report on the Pebble Mine, turned out to be a group of cowards and academic ineptitudes. They took refuge in statements of "not enough." They were unable to go beyond platitudes. Here are some of their vacuous statements—I focus on the reported statement by Dirk Van Zyl who is a nice guy who always seeks the path of compromise:

"As a risk assessment, I would like to see more 'bracketing' of the scenarios and performance. This assessment goes more toward the pessimistic outcomes. I'm not comfortable with how it is put together," said Dirk van Zyl, of the University of British Columbia, one of the scientific reviewers.

Let us face it pessimism is the only rational approach. Given the record of failures of modern facilities at so called well-run mines, Dirk is denying what he knows but has not the courage to tell.

Dirk van Zyl said the scenarios were not realistic but that he also doesn't see any regulatory agency as having the appetite to permit or a financial institution to fund a 78-year mine. "A 30-year mine, yes," he said.

Quite what this silly statement means is beyond me. Is Dirk saying that only 30-year mines may be permitted and funded? Is he saying that we know too little to permit a long-lived mine? He should know. His ancestors lived and enjoyed the mines of South Africa that went on for a lot longer. Or is he admitting that long-lived mines change things beyond recognition and he has not the ability to foresee the changes that the Pebble Mine will cause?

Here is yet another quote of Dirk. What dumb journalist can in clear

honesty report this garbled mess of hesitation and non-sequiturs?

University of British Columbia professor of mine engineering and noted expert on sustainable mineral development Dr. Dirk van Zyl agreed: *"I don't think as given that this scenario is – it's neither realistic or sufficient."* *"Probably my biggest concern is the (EPA's) idea of using good practice versus best practice. I cannot see looking the people in the eye and say 'Sorry guys, I've used good practice, I don't care about best practice.' And to me that is really not the way that any mine in this scenario would be developed."*

Dirk seems to be saying that only best practice will suffice and that the EPA considered only good practice. I am damned if I know the difference. Sounds good, but let me assure you this is propaganda at its most insidious. I have sat in more meetings than Dirk ever will as miners try to decide what to do. They are all honest and well-intentioned. But they are human and prone to error and prejudice. I have even sat in many a peer review session at mines that Dirk thinks of when he says "none have had failures."

That is garbage talk. True that none of their tailings facilities have gone down into adjacent rivers, but they have had failures and it would take torture to get me to tell more. You are just going to have to believe me or Dirk. And I am the blogger so probably more honest.

Of course Anglo American and Northern Dynasty have played it pretty close and not said what they will do. Some of their earlier statements were not good and now, no doubt they are reticent to put on paper what they will do.

It all boils down to these facts;

- Modern tailings facilities do fail.
- In the long term all tailings facilities will fail.
- And when they fail, the environment better be able to absorb the failure,
- Or all hell will break loose for fish and people.

We deserve more of our academics that these pusillanimous platitudes. We deserve more of the three thousand dollars of tax-payer money spent on getting their opinions. We deserve reporters who should quote only whole, grammatical sentences. And provide a decent, intelligent analysis of what was said and done.

I do not know where this will go now. It is up to the politicians and the EPA. Let us hope against hope that they have courage and honesty as their guides in assessing things and making decisions. I doubt it; but we can hope. For our academics have failed us. How can we ask politicians to be more prudent and bold?

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